

REMARKS

Claims 1 - 46 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1, 5, 9, 13, 14, 17 and 21 have been amended, and claims 25 - 46 have been added.

I. Request for Continued Examination

Applicant has submitted a Request for Continued Examination to provide for the entry and consideration of this Amendment.

A personal interview is requested before issuance of the first Office Action to explain the amended and new claims, and how they are patentable over the prior art.

II. Section 112 Rejection

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the indication in the Advisory Action that the Section 112 rejection has been withdrawn.

III. Section 102 Rejection

The Advisory Action indicated that the pending claims were not allowable in view of the Frees et al. patent application (Application Pub. No. US 2003/0149681) ("Frees reference"). Applicant takes this to be a rejection under § 102, noting that the Frees reference was the primary reference cited in the Office Action dated June 27, 2006. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Independent claims 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, and 21 have been amended to clarify that the phrase "evaluation of collaboration level" includes "assessing how successful team members have been in accomplishing a collaboration." This feature distinguishes the recited invention from conventional methods of assessing whether a team is accomplishing a task itself, including the methods in the Frees reference cited in the Advisory Action. For at least this reason, Applicant respectfully submits that the rejection of pending claims 1-24 must be withdrawn.

The Advisory Action identified the Frees reference as disclosing a method that is identical to the method claimed in the present invention. More specifically, the Advisory Action identifies Figs. 50, 56A and 56B along with ¶[0200] of the Frees reference as disclosing methods of feedback that are identical to the method of evaluating a collaboration level recited in the claims. Applicant respectfully submits that the disclosure does not support this assertion.

The Frees reference provides, by way of example of its disclosed method, a team of employees at Party Store having the name "Balloon Promotion," which is assigned the task of selecting new balloons and arrangements that will promote their store. The portions of the Frees reference cited in the Advisory Action disclose an electronic version of a conventional tool widely used by such task-focused, problem solving teams. It is essentially an electronic version of a flip chart used, for example, in a Dale Carnegie-type team brainstorming session. On one side of the flip chart is listed "what's not working" and on the other side is listed "what's working."

Onto this chart team members list observations that are not related at all to the team's collaboration, but instead are directed to accomplishing the team's task itself. For instance, examples of "what's working" include, 1) using cartoon balloons and 2) putting strobe lights on balloons. Examples of "what's not working" include, 1) balloons left in the window too long look old, and 2) red balloons mixed with pink balloons look bad. The Frees reference states in ¶[0050], "[t]he collected information is used to arrive at a collaboratively derived decision." It may be appreciated that the team disclosed in the Frees reference could use the information listed on the electronic flip chart to arrive at a collaboratively derived decision. This decision could be, for example, to purchase cartoon balloons having strobe lights in sufficient supply to replace them before they look too old; and in colors of sufficient variety to prevent the mixing of red and pink balloons.

The claimed invention in the present application is entirely different from the method taught in the Frees reference. The claimed invention does not use collected information to arrive at a collaboratively derived decision. Instead, it uses information to assess, at a given point in time, how well a team has accomplished a collaboration. One illustration of the difference in the claimed invention and the cited reference is in the present method, unlike the method disclosed in the Frees reference, there is no assumption that a team's underlying task should be accomplished. The patent specification discusses using its method to avoid the disastrous results of teams such as those involved in shooting down an Iranian passenger jet in 1988 and those involved in planning the Bay of Pigs invasion. In both of these cases it would have been preferable for the teams to have abandoned their respective tasks. This can be done only using a method that is not strictly task-focused, but instead provides an ongoing evaluation of how well the team has accomplished a collaboration. In contrast, the method disclosed in the Frees reference does not allow for a determination that a team abandon its assigned task.

Applicant respectfully submits that the Frees reference does not disclose a method having the features of the claimed invention, and further respectfully submits that the rejection of the claims as amended must be withdrawn.

IV. New Claims

To provide further clarification of the recited invention, Applicant submits new claims 25 - 46 representing other embodiments of the present invention. These embodiments relate to methods of assessing the level of collaboration knowledge of a team, or alternatively, an individual team member. With respect to the team assessment, the claimed invention further relates to assessing changes in the level of collaboration knowledge, and presenting associated trends to team members. The claimed invention additionally provides for alerting team members of collaboration knowledge deficiencies, and warning team members of the

consequences of these deficiencies. The claimed method can assist in preventing deadly mistakes by providing such assessments to an array of team members addressing life-and-death situations in real-time. In the post 9-11 era, the value of methods that can provide even incremental improvement in team outcomes, and prevent disastrous outcomes, is widely recognized.

Applicant respectfully submits that the prior art does not disclose a method of assessing the cognitive knowledge of team members with respect to collaboration issues. The prior art merely provides conventional methods of team problem-solving in an electronic format. These conventional methods include but are not limited to methods for submitting suggestions on how to solve a problem akin to a conventional suggestion box; preparing electronic progress reports on solving a problem; and using the aforementioned electronic flip-chart. The prior art does not teach the assessment of a team's collaboration knowledge and changes relative thereto over time.

A review of events involved in the shooting down by the United States military of an Iranian passenger jet in 1988 illustrates the importance of assessing a team's collaboration knowledge. On the morning of July 3, 1988, Iran Air Flight 655, an Iranian civilian aircraft carrying 290 passengers and crew, departed Bandar Abbas for a 28-minute flight to Dubai. At the time, the USS *Vincennes* and its crew were nearby in the Strait of Hormuz. According to subsequent US investigations, the crew of the *Vincennes* identified the Iranian aircraft as an attacking Iranian F-14 military plane. The crew fired two surface-to-air missiles which destroyed the aircraft and everyone on board. After the engagement, the crew of the *Vincennes* realized that the plane had been a civilian aircraft.

The US government has attributed this deadly mistake to what it has referred to as "scenario fulfillment," a simultaneous condition amongst the 18 bridge crew of the *Vincennes*. This condition is said to occur when a team is under pressure, and they carry out a training

scenario believing it to be reality while ignoring objective information that contradicts the scenario. In this case the scenario was an attack by a lone military aircraft and the task was to shoot it down. This conclusion explains why the records of the *Vincennes*' instruments detected a civilian IFF signal but never indicated a craft resembling an F-14.

The losses resulting from these types of mistakes, in human life and damaged foreign relationships, are incalculable. It is possible that the application of the method of the present invention to the crew of the *Vincennes* could have prevented this disaster. The present method, which objectively assesses the cognitive knowledge of team members with respect to collaboration issues, may have provided valuable assistance. The recited invention provides 1) education and awareness concerning team collaboration knowledge; 2) an identification of team collaboration knowledge deficiencies such as those related to the knowledge of team business rules and the knowledge of external events; 3) an analysis of trends related to the change of team collaboration knowledge over time; and 4) warnings to the team of the consequences of collaboration knowledge deficiencies. The present invention could have been utilized to assess the crew of the *Vincennes*' level of collaboration knowledge of business rules such as rules of engagement, or external events such as the status of scheduled civilian flights. The recited method can provide similar valuable assistance to a wide variety of teams pursuing other difficult missions.

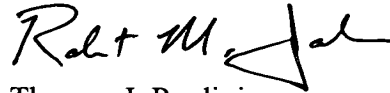
Applicant respectfully submits that the subject matter of the claims are neither taught nor suggested in the prior art, and that pending claims 25 - 46 are in condition for allowance.

V. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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JAO:RMJ/tls

Attachment:
Amendment Transmittal

Date: October 2, 2006

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